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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF SE WILLIAMSON TO LIBYA

¶1. (SBU) Your trip to Libya comes one month after Secretary Rice's historic visit marked a new chapter in Libya's re-engagement with the West and nearly two months after a U.S.-Libyan agreement to settle outstanding claims for compensation for attacks including the Lockerbie bombing of ¶1988. In recent years, Libyan Leader Muammar al-Qadhafi has rebranded himself as a leader of Africa and a mediator in African affairs. He is personally invested in peace in Chad and Sudan. Libya's diplomatic effort is led by Dr. Ali Treiki, a career diplomat and former foreign minister with over 40 years of experience.

QADHAFI'S LEADERSHIP ASPIRATIONS

¶2. (SBU) Libya celebrated 39 years of the "Al-Fateh" revolution last month. Since taking power in a bloodless coup in 1969, Qadhafi has pursued policies ranging from support for terrorism, rebellion, and insurgency to forging diplomatic bonds throughout the Arab and African spheres. The Sirte Declaration of September 1999 is touted here as the genesis of the African Union and a platform for the future "United States of Africa." Domestic propaganda celebrates Qadhafi as the father and guide of closer integration on the continent. Despite his leadership aspirations, the Leader is open to an international solution for Darfur. During her visit, the Secretary told Qadhafi that the U.S. wants to cooperate with Libya to secure peace in Africa and particularly in Sudan.

¶3. (SBU) Resolving the conflict in Darfur is also strategically important for Libya. Regime security depends, in part, on regional security. Senior GOL officials have made it clear that they are concerned that al-Qaida and associated groups could gain a foothold in ungoverned areas like Darfur. They worry about a potential "belt of terrorism" running from Somalia in the east to Mauritania in the west. A secure Sudan would bisect that belt, but if Chad and Sudan are unable to control their territories, Libya fears its own desert south will be vulnerable to terrorist infiltration.

LIBYA'S POINT-MAN ON DARFUR, SUDAN, CHAD

¶4. (SBU) Dr. Ali Treiki personally leads the GOL's diplomatic engagement on African issues. Treiki is a career diplomat who has served multiple times as PermRep in New York and as foreign minister. He now handles the Africa portfolio within the Foreign Ministry, but sits in the Prime Minister's office -- possibly a sign of his unique status within the GOL, as he is said to report directly to the Leader, and not to the Foreign Minister. Treiki will leave Libya in the spring or summer of next year to take on the presidency of the UN General Assembly for 2009.

¶15. (SBU) Treiki is supportive of the UN-AU peace process in principle, but worries about the effectiveness of AU troops in the region. He sees reconciliation between Chad and Sudan as a prerequisite to peace in Darfur and has hosted meetings between both sides to reach an end to hostilities. Treiki is willing to pay lip service to the Dakar Process and the efforts of the Contact Group in order to maintain cordial African relations. He has expressed doubt about the effectiveness of Arab League or Qatari intervention. He sees tri-lateral engagement between Libya, Chad, and Sudan as the most promising approach, given these governments' direct stake in the outcome. He views last month's agreement to exchange ambassadors between N'Djamena and Khartoum as a first step toward Chadian-Sudanese cooperation that will include a bilateral peacekeeping force to monitor the border. Treiki recently told us that Libya strongly opposes the ICC indictment of President Bashir, believing this will only harden Bashir's stance on Darfur.

¶16. (SBU) Libya's previous attempts to broker peace under Treiki's guidance have not yet borne fruit. The Darfur peace conference held in Sirte in 2007 disbanded after key rebel groups failed to attend. An intra-Chadian reconciliation conference held at the same time and attended by President Deby, Bashir, and Chadian rebels resulted in an agreed ceasefire. That ceasefire proved to be shortlived, however, and rebels resumed their attacks against the government in February 2008. Chadian intra-rebel talks held in Tripoli last spring and observed by the EU and UN also fizzled.

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¶17. (SBU) Treiki enjoyed a good relationship with your predecessor and appreciates working with the United States. He thinks Libya is best positioned to bring peace to Darfur because of its proximity to the conflict, but he is open to effective foreign cooperation. However, he believes the situation in Sudan is an African problem that demands an African solution and will prefer to work within the framework of a resurrected Sirte agreement.

MANAGING PERCEPTIONS IMPORTANT FOR COOPERATION

¶18. (SBU) Qadhafi's desire to be viewed as a leader defines the parameters under which Libya can coordinate efforts in Sudan. He has railed against Western colonization in Africa and raised his concerns on AFRICOM with the Secretary. Treiki will need to balance the Leader's interest in success in Sudan with the need to show independence and leadership.

STEVENS